

The US Constitution

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is a constitution?
2. Does your country have a constitution?
3. Do most citizens in your country know their rights?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
 Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| ___ 1. framework | a) to collect |
| ___ 2. craft | b) to make sure or guarantee |
| ___ 3. ratify | c) to announce |
| ___ 4. consist of | d) to manage or lead |
| ___ 5. ensure | e) a basic structure |
| ___ 6. declare | f) to motivate or influence |
| ___ 7. conduct | g) to approve |
| ___ 8. levy | h) to be made of |
| ___ 9. evolve | i) to change or develop |
| ___ 10. inspire | j) to create or produce |

Reading

1. At the end of the 18th century, the United States was a brand-new country that had recently gained independence from England. As a newly founded country, the US needed a **framework** for its government.
2. A group of men who were called the “Framers” got together to **craft** a document that would become the basis for this new government. After four long months of debate, the US Constitution was **ratified** on September 17, 1787, and thus became the supreme law of the land.
3. Before the Constitution was created, the country did not have a president and the central government was very weak. The Constitution established a strong federal government that **consists of** three branches: the legislative branch, which makes the laws; the executive branch, which enforces the laws; and the judicial branch, which interprets the laws. In addition, the Constitution set up a system of checks and balances to make certain that power is shared among the branches.
4. The Constitution also **ensures** that there is a division of power between the federal government and state governments. Maintaining a military, creating a postal service, and **declaring** war are some of the powers given to the federal government. States, on the other hand, have the authority to create schools, **conduct** local elections, and regulate marriages and businesses. The federal government and state governments also share a number of powers, such as building roads and **levying** taxes.
5. The Framers realized that as the country grew and developed, the Constitution would also need to **evolve**. Consequently, they decided to allow changes, called amendments, to be made to the Constitution. In 1791, Congress approved 10 amendments. These 10 amendments make up the Bill of Rights, and they guarantee basic individual liberties including freedom of speech and freedom of religion.
6. The US Constitution is the oldest constitution used in the world today. With its 27 amendments, it remains relevant for the governance of the people of the United States. Furthermore, this famous document has **inspired** the establishment of other nations’ constitutions throughout the years.

“The US Constitution doesn’t guarantee happiness, only the pursuit of it. You have to catch up with it yourself.”

—Benjamin Franklin

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information in your notebook.

- _____ 1. George Washington, the first US president, wrote the Constitution.
- _____ 2. The United States has three branches of government.
- _____ 3. The Constitution gives all the power to the federal government.
- _____ 4. It is possible to change the Constitution.
- _____ 5. Freedom of speech was in the original version of the Constitution.
- _____ 6. Currently, there are 10 amendments to the Constitution.

B. Ask & Answer

Practise asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. When did the US Constitution become official?
- 2. How long did it take to write the Constitution?
- 3. What are the three branches of the US government?
- 4. What are three of the powers that the Constitution gives states?
- 5. What is the Bill of Rights?

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1. You may need to change the form.

1. A BLT is a sandwich that _____ bacon, lettuce, and tomato.
2. The student council _____ a new dress code for students at their last meeting.
3. Ibrahim spent a long time _____ his essay because he wanted it to be perfect.
4. Having games and prizes will _____ that the children have fun at the party.
5. The painting was so beautiful that it _____ me to write a poem.

B. Choose the Closest Meaning

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The <u>outline</u> provides a framework for the essay.
a) skeleton
b) judge
c) amendment | 4. Simon <u>crafted</u> a sculpture out of things he found in the recycling bin.
a) judged
b) exhibited
c) created | 7. Tina wrote a short story that later <u>evolved</u> into her first novel.
a) developed
b) ratified
c) replaced |
| 2. After he <u>declared</u> his love for her, he asked her to marry him.
a) denied
b) promised
c) announced | 5. My father <u>inspired</u> me to always try my best.
a) commanded
b) explained to
c) motivated | 8. The teacher <u>conducts</u> her class with a combination of discipline and grace.
a) rewards
b) punishes
c) leads |
| 3. Vivian's essay <u>consisted of</u> some interesting arguments, so the teacher gave her an A.
a) included
b) rejected
c) forgot | 6. The meeting will not end until a new employee handbook has been <u>ratified</u> .
a) made up
b) approved
c) decorated | 9. Her hard work has <u>ensured</u> that she has gotten a raise every year.
a) guaranteed
b) celebrated
c) declared |

The First Amendment

A. Ranking

Below is a list of the five liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. Discuss what each one means in pairs or as a class. Then rank them from the most important (1) to the least important (5).

- _____ 1. Freedom of Speech
- _____ 2. Freedom of the Press
- _____ 3. Freedom of Religion
- _____ 4. Freedom to Assemble Peaceably
- _____ 5. Freedom to Petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances

B. Pair Work

Compare your ranking with your partner's. Discuss why you chose to rank the freedoms in the order that you did.

Grammar Review

ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

A. Explanation

An adjective clause (also called a relative clause) is a type of dependent clause that describes a noun or noun phrase.

Adjective clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun (*that, who, whom, which, when, where, or whose*).

Examples: The book **that Mary recommended** is 400 pages long.

The Titanic, which is my favourite movie, came out in 1997.

B. Practice

In the Reading on page 2, there are seven adjective clauses. Write them in the chart below. Then write the noun that they modify. The first one has been done for you.

#	Adjective Clause	Noun
1	<i>that had recently gained independence from England</i>	<i>country</i>
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Discussion

1. Why is it important to have an official document that explains how the government of a country should be run?
2. Do you think that the Constitution's system of checks and balances works in today's political climate? Why or why not?
3. September 17 has been designated Constitution Day in the United States. All schools in the US that receive federal funding must teach about the Constitution on this day. Do you think this is a good idea? Explain your opinion.